

Team Spirit<sup>®</sup>



# THE DETROIT LIONS

By Mark Stewart



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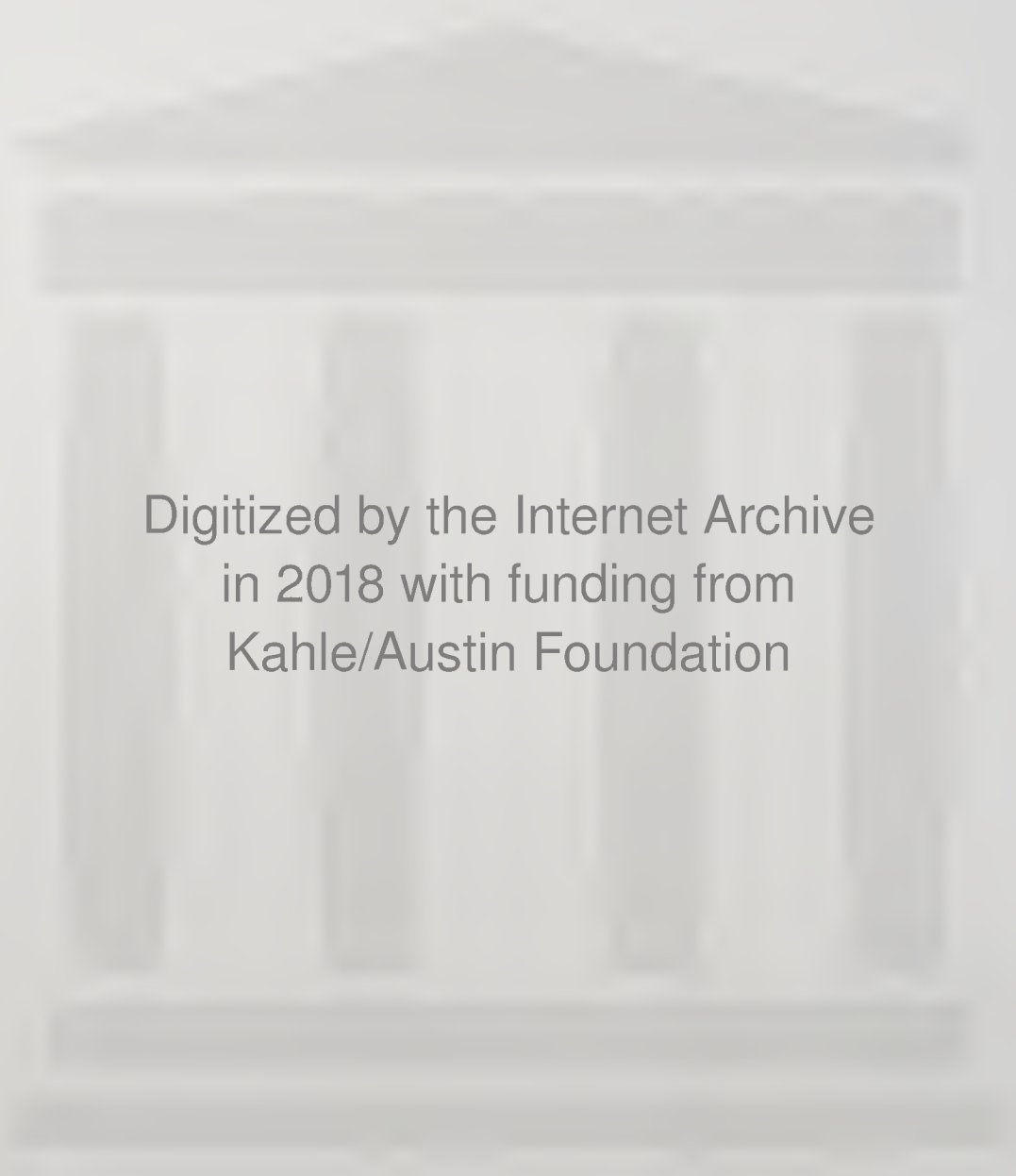


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Team Spirit®

THE **D**ETROIT  
**L**IONS

BY  
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**COVER PHOTO:**

The Lions celebrate a good defensive play during a 2008 game.

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SPORTS WORDS & VOCABULARY WORDS: In this book, you will find many words that are new to you. You may also see familiar words used in new ways. The glossary on page 46 gives the meanings of football words, as well as “everyday” words that have special football meanings. These words appear in **bold type** throughout the book. The glossary on page 47 gives the meanings of vocabulary words that are not related to football. They appear in *bold italic type* throughout the book.





# Meet the Lions

In the animal world, lions are the top predators. They live as a family and work as a team. In the football world, the Detroit Lions go about their business in much the same way. The players support each other and give everything they have to succeed. Everyone on the team has a job to do. Winning depends on contributions from stars and their teammates.

The Lions have been playing exciting, hard-hitting football for more than 75 seasons. Some of the top stars in the game have worn the team's famous silver-and-blue uniform. Detroit fans often act as a "12th man" on the field. In other words, they know their football, and when they cheer their loudest, the Lions are a very tough team to beat.

This book tells the story of the Lions. Some years they rely on their defense to win. Other years the offense is the first to strike. When both units are working together, the Lions are one of the most dangerous teams in football. They are truly the "pride" of Detroit!

The Lions gang up on defense to stop the Chicago Bears during a 2008 game.

# Way Back When

The story of the Lions began 300 miles south of Detroit, Michigan—in the city of Portsmouth, Ohio. There, a **professional** team called the Spartans had become very powerful during the 1920s. The Spartans decided to join the **National Football**

**League (NFL)** in 1930. In 1931 and again in 1932, they nearly won the championship.

The Spartans were led by two excellent runners, Dutch Clark and Glenn Presnell. They also had two big linemen, Ox Emerson and George Christensen. Clark was *sensational*. He ran with the ball like a jackrabbit. He was also a good passer and kicker, and a top defensive player.



In 1934, the Spartans moved to Detroit and changed their name to the Lions. Clark was still the star of the team. He led the Lions to the 1935 **NFL Championship**.

The Lions had other stars in their **backfield** during the 1930s and 1940s, including Byron “Whizzer” White, Frank Sinkwich, and Bill Dudley. However, it was not until the 1950s—when the team built a

**LEFT:** Dutch Clark, the Lions' first star.

**RIGHT:** A 1952 trading card of Bobby Layne.

great defense—that the Lions returned to the top of the NFL. During these years, Detroit fans cheered as loudly for their defense as they did for their offense.

The Lions reached the NFL Championship four times during the 1950s. They won the title three times. The defense starred Joe Schmidt, Les Bingaman, Jim David, Yale Lary, and Jack Christiansen. Quarterback Bobby Layne was the heart of the Lions. As long as there was time on the clock, his teammates believed he could lead them to victory. Layne guided an offense that included *dynamic* players such as Doak Walker, Cloyce Box, Hopalong Cassady, Bob Hoernschemeyer, Lou Creekmur, and Leon Hart.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Lions put many good players on the field. Their defensive stars included Alex Karras, Roger Brown, Wayne Walker, Mike Lucci, Lem Barney, and Dick LeBeau. Their top offensive players were Gail Cogdill, Nick Pietrosante, Greg Landry, Charlie Sanders, Mel Farr, and Steve Owens. However, during these two *decades*, the Lions were never serious *contenders* for a championship.





During the 1980s and 1990s, the Lions relied on the talents of two *extraordinary* running backs, Billy Sims and Barry Sanders. Sims led the **National Football Conference (NFC)** in rushing touchdowns twice. In 1983, he helped the Lions finish in first place for the first time in 26 years.

Sanders joined Detroit in 1989. He was one of the fastest and most *elusive* runners in NFL history. He gained more than 1,000 yards 10 seasons in a row. With help from Herman Moore, Mel Gray, Lomas Brown, Chris Spielman, and Jerry Ball, Sanders led the Lions all the way to the 1991 **NFC Championship Game**.

In 1997, Sanders ran for 2,053 yards, caught 33 passes, and scored 14 touchdowns. He had another superb year in 1998 and needed just a few more yards to become the NFL's all-time leading rusher. But Sanders surprised everyone by retiring. After a long career, he was worn out. As the Lions entered the 21st *century*, the team and its fans prepared for "life without Barry."



**LEFT:** Barry Sanders looks for oncoming tacklers. He was the top running back in team history. **ABOVE:** Billy Sims, who starred for Detroit before Sanders.



# The Team Today

**F**ootball teams spend a lot of time and money trying to find just the right mix of players to form a winner. Sometimes they are successful, and sometimes they are not. The Lions are strongest when they build around a group of game-changing stars. In the early years of the 21st century, the Lions were unable to find players with this kind of skill.

The Lions decided to start over and rebuild with young players. It was a painful process. In 2008, the Lions went 0–16. No team had ever lost that many games in a season. Still, there was plenty of talent on the **roster**, including rising stars Kevin Smith, Calvin Johnson, Ernie Sims, and Cory Redding. In the **draft**, the Lions picked quarterback Matthew Stafford and looked to him as a new team leader.

To guide these up-and-coming players, the team put together an **all-star** coaching **lineup**. Three of the NFL's smartest coaches—Jim Schwartz, Scott Linehan, and Gunther Cunningham—joined forces in Detroit before the 2009 season. Their goal was to teach the young Lions how to work together to win games. This was the best way to restore the roar to the Lions.

Kevin Smith and Calvin Johnson leap high in the air to celebrate a touchdown during the 2008 season.



LIONS

FORD FIELD

Quincy



# Home Turf

**F**or most of their years in Detroit, the Lions played in Tiger Stadium. It was also called Briggs Stadium. The Tigers baseball team made its home there, too.

The Lions moved into a new indoor stadium called the Silverdome in 1975. It was located in the town of Pontiac, about 30 miles from Detroit. At the time, the Lions' stadium was the largest air-supported "soft" dome in the world.

In 2002, the Lions moved back to Detroit. Ford Field—named after the car company—was part of the city's effort to revive its downtown area. It was built to include a 1920s factory, which gave the stadium an old-time feel. Ford Field was originally planned as an outdoor stadium, but it was constructed as an indoor stadium. Still, its skylight and glass windows let in plenty of sunlight.



## BY THE NUMBERS

- *There are 65,000 seats for football in the Lions' stadium.*
- *It cost \$430 million to build.*
- *In 2007, the Lions' stadium hosted Wrestlemania 23.*
- *As of 2008, the Lions had retired five numbers—7 (Dutch Clark), 22 (Bobby Layne), 37 (Doak Walker), 56 (Joe Schmidt), and 85 (Chuck Hughes).*

# Dressed for Success

The Lions have featured the same basic uniform colors since they arrived in Detroit. The players wore silver helmets and pants with blue and white jerseys back then—and they still do today. The team’s bright blue color was inspired by the water in Hawaii. It is called Honolulu Blue and goes perfectly with silver.

The Lions’ team colors were chosen by star runner and kicker Glenn Presnell and his wife when the Portsmouth Spartans moved to Detroit from Ohio. Team owner George Richards let the Presnells pick from a number of different uniform styles. The old Portsmouth

uniform was a dark shade of blue.

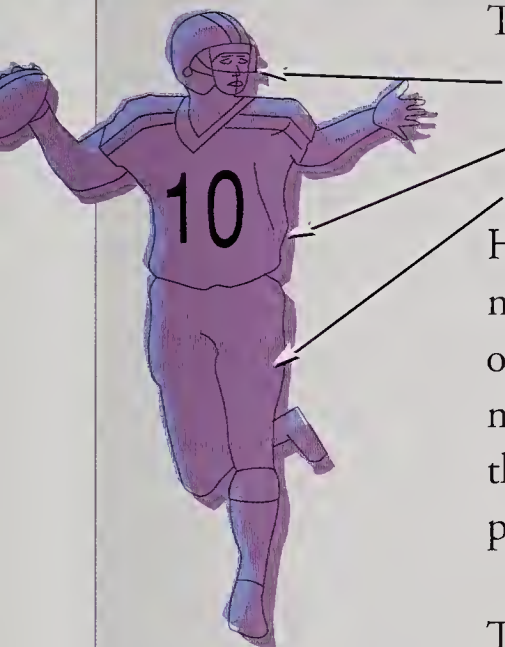
In 1948, the team switched to maroon, but no one liked the new color. The Lions went back to their old colors. A blue lion *logo* was added to the team’s silver helmet in 1961. Fans named the lion “Bubbles.” In 2009, the Lions unveiled a new look with a fierce lion.

Gary Danielson models the team’s uniform from the 1980s.





## UNIFORM BASICS



The football uniform has three important parts—

- Helmet
- Jersey
- Pants

Helmets used to be made out of leather, and they did not have facemasks—ouch! Today, helmets are made of super-strong plastic. The uniform top, or jersey, is made of thick fabric. It fits snugly around a player so that tacklers cannot grab it and pull him down. The pants come down just over the knees.

There is a lot more to a football uniform than what you see on the outside. Air can be pumped inside the helmet to give it a snug, padded fit. The jersey covers shoulder pads, and sometimes a rib protector called a flak jacket. The pants include pads that protect the hips, thighs, *tailbone*, and knees.

Football teams have two sets of uniforms—one dark and one light. This makes it easier to tell two teams apart on the field. Almost all teams wear their dark uniforms at home and their light ones on the road.

Cory Redding wears the Lions' 2008 home uniform.



# We Won!

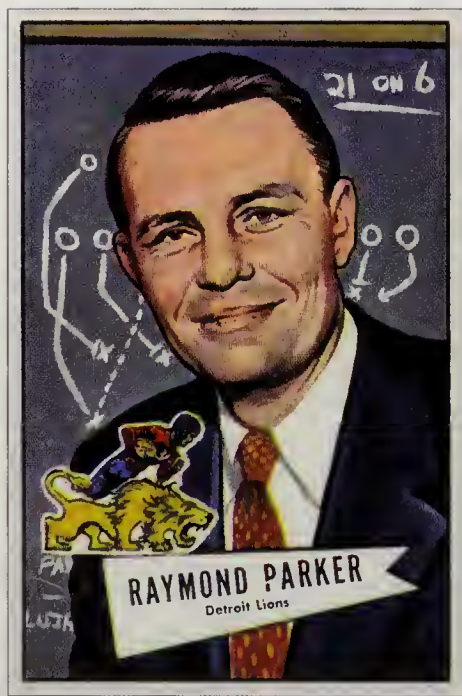
During the 1930s, the **Western Division** of the NFL was home to the Lions, Chicago Bears, and Green Bay Packers. These teams still battle one another today in the **North Division** of the NFC. In 1935, the Lions won their division by beating the Packers and Bears in their final four games. Detroit had a powerful

running attack and a good defense. They would need both against the New York Giants in the NFL Championship.

The two clubs met on a muddy field in Detroit. It snowed during the game, making the conditions even worse. Four different Lions—Ace Gutowsky, Dutch Clark, Ernie Caddel, and Buddy Parker—scored touchdowns. Detroit won 26–7.

The Lions returned to the NFL Championship in 1952. Parker had retired as

a player and become their coach. He built a great defense around stars Jack Christiansen and Yale Lary and a ***gigantic*** lineman named Les Bingaman. Quarterback Bobby Layne threw to receivers Cloyce Box and Leon Hart. The Lions also handed the ball to Bob Hoernschemeyer,





who crashed through holes opened by Lou Creekmur and the other Detroit linemen.

The Lions faced the Cleveland Browns for the 1952 title. Several players were injured for Cleveland, and Detroit showed no mercy. Layne scored the game's first touchdown, and Doak Walker produced Detroit's second touchdown on a thrilling 67-yard run. The Lions celebrated a 17–7 victory.

**LEFT:** A 1952 trading card of Buddy Parker, whose real name was Raymond. **ABOVE:** The Lions take down Cleveland's Otto Graham during the 1952 NFL Championship.

The Lions added several talented **rookies** to their lineup in 1953, including linebacker Joe Schmidt. The young players learned how to



blend with the **veterans** as the season progressed. Detroit won its final six games to reach the NFL Championship. Once again, they faced the Browns.

The score was tied 10–10 after three quarters. The Browns kicked two **field goals** in the final period to take a 16–10 lead. With less than five minutes left, Layne drove the Lions into Cleveland territory. Then he surprised the Browns with a touchdown toss to Jim Doran, who had caught only six passes all year. Walker

kicked the **extra point** for a dramatic 17–16 win.

Four years later, the Lions won their third championship of the decade. Parker left the team just before the 1957 season. New coach George Wilson led Detroit to a first-place tie in their division with the San Francisco 49ers. The Lions beat the 49ers in an exciting **playoff game**, and then faced the Browns once again for the championship.

Detroit had revenge on its mind against Cleveland. In 1954, the Browns had won in a blowout over the Lions in the NFL Championship. That loss still stung for Detroit's players and fans.



With Layne injured and unable to play, the Lions looked to Tobin Rote as his replacement. Rote was sensational. He threw for four touchdowns and ran for another. The Detroit defense **intercepted** five passes and held star running back Jim Brown to just 69 yards. The final score was 59–14.

**LEFT:** Bobby Layne, the star for Detroit's 1953 championship team.

**ABOVE:** Tobin Rote fires a pass during the 1957 NFL Championship.

# Go-To Guys

To be a true star in the NFL, you need more than fast feet and a big body. You have to be a “go-to guy”—someone the coach wants on the field at the end of a big game. Fans of the Lions have had a lot to cheer about over the years, including these great stars ...

## THE PIONEERS

### DUTCH CLARK                      Running Back/Defensive Back/Kicker

- BORN: 10/11/1906    • DIED: 8/5/1978
- PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1931 TO 1932 & 1934 TO 1938

Dutch Clark had terrible eyesight, but he was a good tackler and great runner who had amazing moves. When Clark carried the ball, he often faked his way past three or four opponents before they finally brought him down. Clark was one of the first players to wear gloves on cold days.

### DOAK WALKER                      Running Back/Kicker

- BORN: 1/1/1927    • DIED: 9/27/1998
- PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1950 TO 1955

Doak Walker did everything on offense for the Lions. He led the NFL in points scored as a rookie and again in 1955. Walker retired while still one of the top players in professional football.





## BOBBY LAYNE

## Quarterback

• BORN: 12/19/1926 • DIED: 12/1/1986 • PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1950 TO 1958

Bobby Layne was one of the most exciting players in the NFL. He led the Lions to one great *comeback* after another. Layne was nicknamed the “Blond Bomber” for his blond hair and strong throwing arm. In 1956, he became Detroit’s kicker and made 80 percent of his field goals!

## JACK CHRISTIANSEN

## Defensive Back

• BORN: 12/20/1928 • DIED: 6/29/1986 • PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1951 TO 1958

When Jack Christiansen played, the Detroit defense was known as “Chris’s Crew.” Christiansen intercepted 46 passes during his eight seasons with the Lions. He also ran back eight punts for touchdowns.

## YALE LARY

## Defensive Back/Punter

• BORN: 11/24/1930 • PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1952 TO 1953 & 1956 TO 1964

Yale Lary teamed with Jack Christiansen to give the Lions a great pass defense. He could cover anyone in the NFL. Lary also had a strong and accurate kicking leg. He was the league’s best punter year after year.

## JOE SCHMIDT

## Linebacker

• BORN: 1/18/1932 • PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1953 TO 1965

Joe Schmidt patrolled the field like a shark. He located the ball carrier and then glided in for the crushing tackle. Schmidt was impossible to fake out and hard to block. During the 1950s, there was not a better linebacker in the NFL.



**LEFT:** Doak Walker    **RIGHT:** Joe Schmidt

# MODERN STARS

## ALEX KARRAS

## Defensive Lineman

- BORN: 7/15/1935
- PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1958 TO 1962 & 1964 TO 1970

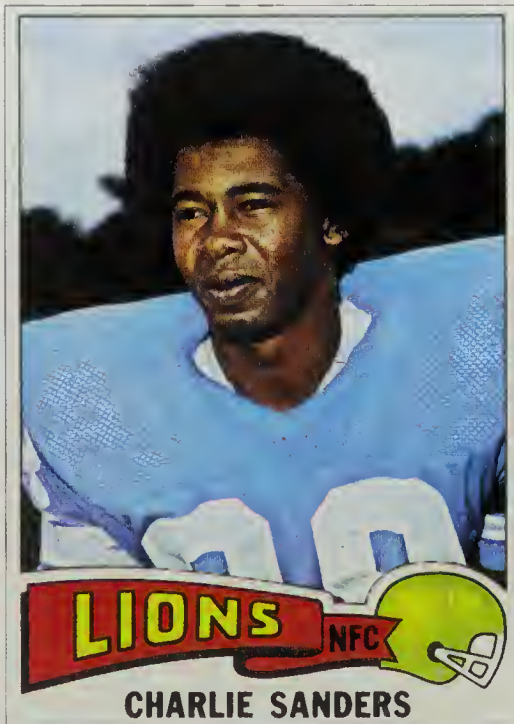
Alex Karras was a former wrestling champion. He was an expert at using his hands and arms to keep opponents from blocking him. He later became a popular television and movie actor.

## LEM BARNEY

## Defensive Back/Kick Returner

- BORN: 9/8/1945
- PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1967 TO 1977

Lem Barney continued Detroit's great defensive *tradition*. During his career, he intercepted 56 passes and also returned kicks and punts. Barney was named to the **Pro Bowl** seven times in 11 seasons.



## CHARLIE SANDERS

## Tight End

- BORN: 8/25/1946
- PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1968 TO 1977

Charlie Sanders was one of the NFL's first great **all-around** tight ends. He could block on running plays and get open when the Lions needed to pass. Sanders was an unstoppable "possession" receiver—quarterbacks looked for him whenever they wanted to make a first down.

## BILLY SIMS

## Running Back

- BORN: 9/18/1955
- PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1980 TO 1984

The Lions took Billy Sims with the first pick in the 1980 NFL draft. He was a quick, creative runner who also had tremendous strength. Defenses never knew whether Sims would try to sprint to the sideline or barrel right through the middle. He scored 31 touchdowns in his first 30 games with Detroit.

## BARRY SANDERS      Running Back

- BORN: 7/16/1968
- PLAYED FOR TEAM: 1989 TO 1998

Barry Sanders was football's great escape artist. His stops, starts, cuts, and spins left opponents grabbing at air. Sanders led the NFC in rushing five times, including the 1997 season when he gained more than 2,000 yards. He was voted the NFL's **Most Valuable Player (MVP)** that year.

## ERNIE SIMS      Linebacker

- BORN: 12/23/1984
- FIRST SEASON WITH TEAM: 2006

When Ernie Sims joined Detroit, he reminded many fans of the team's great defensive stars of years past. Sims went after ball carriers like a guided missile. The Lions made Sims the leader of their defense in just his second season as a pro.





# On the Sidelines

**D**uring the 1930s, coach Potsy Clark and owner George Richards turned the Lions into a powerhouse. Clark was a genius when it came to getting the most out of his players. Richards, who owned several radio stations, broadcast Detroit games in nearly 100 cities. The Lions became one of the NFL's most popular teams.

Detroit reached three championship games in a row under Buddy Parker starting in 1952. Parker was very smart and creative. During practice, he designed plays that used the special skills of his players. During games, he figured out an opponent's plan and told his players how to stop it.

Over the last 50 years, the Lions have had other creative and dedicated coaches. Among the best were George Wilson, Joe Schmidt, Monte Clark, and Wayne Fontes. Under Fontes, the Lions ran an offense known as the "Silver Stretch." It was very risky but also very exciting. In recent years, Bobby Ross, Steve Mariucci, and Jim Schwartz—three of the NFL's most talented coaches—have led the Lions.

George Wilson watches the action from the sidelines. He led the Lions to the 1957 NFL Championship.

# One Great Day

JANUARY 5, 1992

The 1991 season started badly for the Lions. They lost their opening game 45–0, and several players—including quarterback Rodney Peete—went down with injuries. Many thought the Lions were done after Mike Utley was *paralyzed* by a



neck injury during a game. He was one of the team's most popular players. As doctors wheeled him off the field, Utley struggled to give his teammates the thumbs-up sign. The Lions were inspired and won their final six games to finish 12–4.

That January, the Lions hosted their first **postseason game** since 1957. The mighty Dallas Cowboys came to Detroit determined to stop Barry Sanders. He was the NFL's best running back. Lions fans hoped he would run wild against the Dallas defense.

The Lions decided to cross up the Cowboys. Backup quarterback Erik Kramer hit Willie



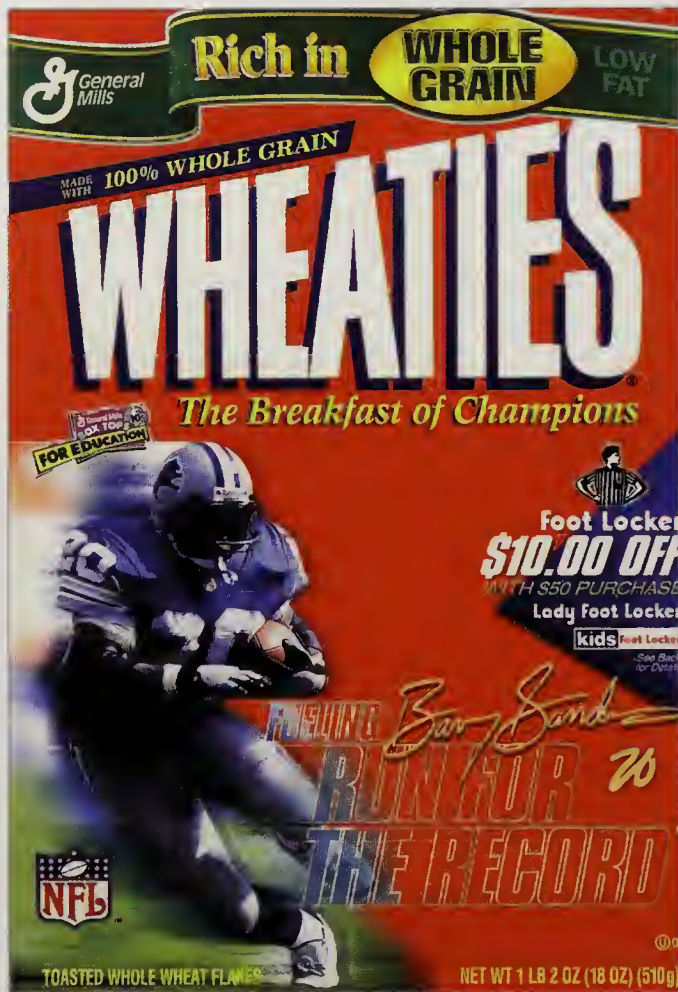
Green for a 31-yard touchdown. Then Melvin Jenkins intercepted a pass for the Lions and ran it back for another touchdown.

When the second half began, the Cowboys were still waiting for Sanders to strike. Instead, Kramer threw touchdown passes to Green and Herman Moore to take a 31–6 lead. Finally, in the fourth quarter, Detroit let Sanders do his thing. He took a handoff and darted through the Dallas defense for a 47-yard touchdown. That made the final score 38–6. To this day, Detroit fans still talk about this amazing victory.

**LEFT:** Barry Sanders warms up before a game.

**ABOVE:** Lomas Brown celebrates Detroit's 38–6 victory.

# Legend Has It



Who was the most “collectible” Lion?

LEGEND HAS IT that Barry Sanders was. In 1999, Sanders appeared on a Wheaties box that congratulated him on becoming the NFL’s all-time leading rusher. The only problem was that Sanders unexpectedly retired a few yards short of reaching this goal. Sports collectors rushed to supermarkets. They hoped to buy boxes of the cereal before they were quickly pulled off the

shelves. Today, no Lions *memorabilia* collection is complete without one of these Wheaties boxes.

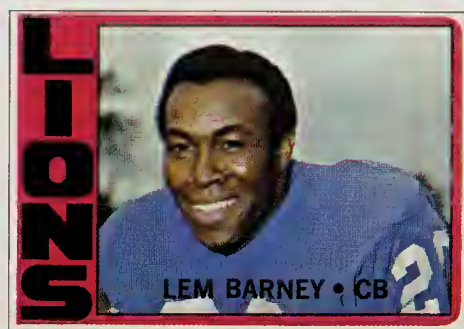
**ABOVE:** The famous Wheaties box featuring Barry Sanders.

**RIGHT:** Mel Farr and Lem Barney



## Which Lions teammates performed on a #1 hit record?

**LEGEND HAS IT** that Mel Farr and Lem Barney did. In 1970, singer Marvin Gaye tried out for the Lions. He did not make the team, but Barney and Farr became his good friends. Gaye invited them into the studio when he recorded the 1971 hit song “What’s Going On.” Their voices can be heard in the background.



## Which team had the NFL’s deepest backfield?

**LEGEND HAS IT** that the 1935 Lions did. Detroit ran over its opponents on the way to the NFL Championship that season. Dutch Clark, Ernie Caddel, Glenn Presnell, and Ace Gutowsky were all among the league’s Top 20 in rushing yards. Three other fine runners—Buddy Parker, Bill Shepherd, and Frank Christensen—had to settle for blocking duties. No team has ever had a better set of running backs. In 1936, the Lions gained 2,885 rushing yards to set an NFL record. The mark stood for 36 years.

# It Really Happened

The 1957 season was full of surprises for Detroit's players and fans. Before the first game, popular coach Buddy Parker quit. His assistant, George Wilson, took over. No one knew what to expect from the team.

Detroit didn't skip a beat under Wilson. He led the Lions to an 8–4 record. They finished the year tied at the top of their division with the San Francisco 49ers. The two teams faced each other in San Francisco to decide who would move on to the NFL Championship.

The Lions were without their beloved leader, Bobby Layne. He had broken his leg late in the season. Strong-armed Tobin Rote took over the team. Against the 49ers, Detroit fell behind 24–7 after two quarters. In the locker room at halftime, the Lions could hear the 49ers celebrating next door. This made them angry.

In the second half, the Lions came to life. Trailing San Francisco by 20 points, they staged a great comeback. Detroit scored three touchdowns in less than five minutes. One came on a 58-yard run by Tom Tracy. He had rushed for just 46 yards all season.

Detroit led 28–27. Now the 49ers came storming back. San Francisco had four chances to score in the final quarter, but each time



Yale Lary leaps to intercept a pass against the San Francisco 49ers during the 1957 postseason.

the defense took the ball away on a **fumble** or interception. Jim Martin booted a 13-yard field goal for the Lions to make the final score 31–27.



# Team Spirit

In millions of homes around the country, eating turkey and watching the Lions on television has become a Thanksgiving tradition. Detroit has hosted a game on this holiday since 1934. Many of the team's greatest moments have come on "Turkey Day." Detroit's Thanksgiving game is broadcast on television and carried on radio stations across the country.

Another team tradition is Detroit's *mascot*, Roary. He's a big lion who leads the fans as they cheer for the team. Roary has become one of the most popular mascots in the NFL. Between games and after the season, he hits the road to visit young fans. He is known for being a daredevil. Roary water skis, snow-tubes, and rides mechanical bulls.

In Detroit, rooting for the Lions through thick and thin has been a tradition for more than 70 seasons. Win or lose, the Lions make football exciting, and the fans love them for it. Even after the team's "historic" 0–16 season in 2008, most of the people who root for the Lions still believed they would make it to the **Super Bowl** one day.

Fans in Detroit never give up—they always support their team.

# Timeline

In this timeline, the NFC Championship is listed under the year it was played. Remember that the NFC Championship and the Super Bowl are held early in the year and are actually part of the previous season. For example, Super Bowl XLIII was played on February 1st, 2009, but it was the championship of the 2008 season.

1934

The team moves to Detroit and becomes the Lions.

1940

Byron "Whizzer" White leads the NFL in rushing.

1935

The Lions win their first NFL Championship.

1949

Bob Mann leads the NFL in receiving yards.

1953

The Lions win their second NFL Championship in a row.



Ernie Caddel, a star for the 1935 champs.



Bob Mann



Greg Landry



Herman Moore

1972  
Quarterback Greg Landry runs for nine touchdowns.

1992  
The Lions reach the NFC Championship.

1995  
Herman Moore sets an NFL record with 123 catches.

1957  
The Lions win their third NFL title in six seasons.

1980  
Dexter Bussey leads the NFC with 5.0 yards per carry.

2008  
Calvin Johnson ties for the NFL lead with 12 touchdown receptions.

Calvin Johnson stretches for a touchdown in 2008.



# Fun Facts



## FAST STARTER

---

In 1986, quarterback Chuck Long threw for a touchdown on the first pass of his NFL career.

## BEST OF THE REST

---

In 1960, the NFL held a game called the Playoff Bowl. It was a contest between the league's two second-place finishers. The Lions won the first Playoff Bowl, 17–16.

## JUSTICE IS SERVED

---

In the 1940s, Byron “Whizzer” White thrilled Detroit fans with his powerful running. In 1962, he became a Supreme Court Justice.

## MANY HAPPY RETURNS

---

Five Lions have returned kicks for touchdowns of 100 yards or more—Terry Fair (105 and 101), Ron Jessie (102), Mel Gray (102), Billy Jefferson (101), and Pat Studstill (100).



## COLLEGE STARS

---

The Lions have had 10 **Heisman Trophy** winners play for them since the 1940s: Frank Sinkwich, Doak Walker, Leon Hart, Hopalong Cassady, Steve Owens, Billy Sims, Barry Sanders, Andre Ware, Ty Detmer, and Desmond Howard.

## ANIMAL HOUSE

---

Ernie Sims is the NFL's most famous "zookeeper." He has more than two dozen animals in his home, including snakes, bearded dragons, dogs, and tarantulas. One day he hopes to own—what else?—a lion!



## SEE PAT RUN

---

In a 1966 game against the Baltimore Colts, Pat Studstill caught a short pass from Karl Sweetan and scored a 99-yard touchdown.

## FAST FINISH

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In 1997, Barry Sanders gained just 53 yards in the Lions' first two games. Over the final 14, he ran for exactly 2,000 yards—including two 200-yard games—to finish with 2,053 yards.

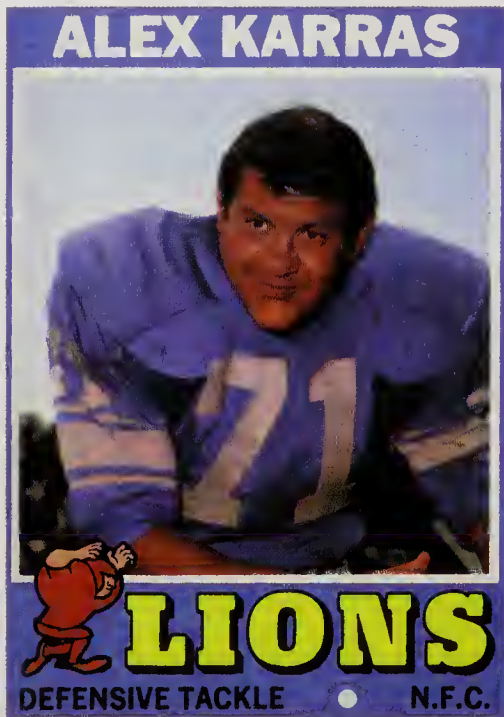
**LEFT:** Chuck Long

**ABOVE:** Leon Hart

# Talking Football

“Anybody can make the first guy miss—I want to make the second and third guys miss, too.”

—Barry Sanders on what made him so hard to tackle



“If it hadn’t been for football, I might still be working in the steel mills.”

—Alex Karras, on how the sport changed his life

“The most important thing is winning the game ... the only record I’m interested in is the number of W’s in those weekly **standings**.”

—Billy Sims, on being a team player

“He had an *instinct* for defense that few players ever acquire.”

—Buddy Parker, on Joe Schmidt

“We used to go to training camp ten days early just to be together—and we weren’t getting paid for it!”

—Doak Walker, on the closeness of the Lions during the 1950s



“I’ve earned the right to be here. I knew what I had to do—get after it one day at a time.”

—Mike Utley, on learning to walk again after suffering an injury that left him paralyzed

“The Lions were a well-organized, well-drilled, and well-coached team.”

—Joe Schmidt, on how Detroit became a championship team in the 1950s

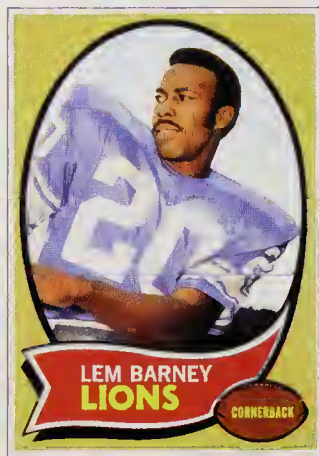
“I’m one of those guys that just wants to win, I don’t care how.”

—Matthew Stafford, on what drives him on the field

**LEFT:** Alex Karras      **ABOVE:** Mike Utley gives the thumbs-up sign during a press conference after his injury.

# For the Record

The great Lions teams and players have left their marks on the record books. These are the “best of the best” ...



Lem Barney



Eddie Murray



## LIONS AWARD WINNERS

WINNER	AWARD	YEAR
Frank Sinkwich	NFL MVP	1944
Don Doll	Pro Bowl MVP	1952
George Wilson	Coach of the Year*	1957
Gail Cogdill	Rookie of the Year**	1960
Joe Schmidt	NFL co-MVP	1960
Mel Farr	Offensive Rookie of the Year	1967
Lem Barney	Defensive Rookie of the Year	1967
Bubba Baker	Defensive Rookie of the Year	1978
Billy Sims	Offensive Rookie of the Year	1980
Eddie Murray	Pro Bowl MVP	1981
Barry Sanders	Offensive Rookie of the Year	1989
Wayne Fontes	Coach of the Year	1991
Barry Sanders	Offensive Player of the Year	1994
Barry Sanders	Offensive Player of the Year	1997
Barry Sanders	NFL co-MVP	1997

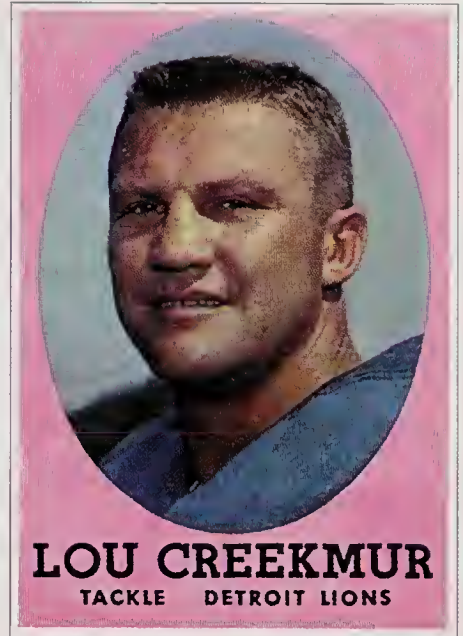
\* The Coach of the Year award is given to the league's best coach.

\*\*The Rookie of the Year award is given to the league's best first-year player.



# LIONS ACHIEVEMENTS

ACHIEVEMENT	YEAR
Western Division Champions	1935
NFL Champions	1935
National Conference Champs	1952
NFL Champions	1952
Western Conference Champions	1953
NFL Champions	1953
Western Conference Champions	1954
Western Conference Champions	1957
NFL Champions	1957
NFC Central Champions	1983
NFC Central Champions	1991
NFC Central Champions	1993



**TOP:** Lou Creekmur, a key player for the 1957 champs.

**ABOVE:** Gail Cogdill, the 1960 Rookie of the Year.

**LEFT:** Barry Sanders takes a handoff.

# Pinpoints

The history of a football team is made up of many smaller stories. These stories take place all over the map—not just in the city a team calls “home.” Match the pushpins on these maps to the Team Facts and you will begin to see the story of the Lions unfold!



# TEAM FACTS

- 1** Detroit, Michigan—*The Lions have played here since 1934.*
- 2** Portsmouth, Ohio—*The team played here as the Spartans from 1930 to 1933.*
- 3** Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—*Joe Schmidt was born here.*
- 4** Richlands, North Carolina—*Charlie Sanders was born here.*
- 5** Miami, Florida—*Lomas Brown was born here.*
- 6** Gulfport, Mississippi—*Lem Barney was born here.*
- 7** St. Louis, Missouri—*Billy Sims was born here.*
- 8** Sublette, Kansas—*Jack Christiansen was born here.*
- 9** Santa Anna, Texas—*Bobby Layne was born here.*
- 10** Fort Collins, Colorado—*Byron White was born here.*
- 11** Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada—*Eddie Murray was born here.*
- 12** Munich, Germany—*Gunther Cunningham was born here.*



Jack Christiansen



# Play Ball

**F**ootball is a sport played by two teams on a field that is 100 yards long. The game is divided into four 15-minute quarters. Each team must have 11 players on the field at all times. The group that has the ball is called the offense. The group trying to keep the offense from moving the ball forward is called the defense.

A football game is made up of a series of “plays.”

Each play starts and ends with a referee’s signal. A play begins when the center snaps the ball between his legs to the quarterback.

The quarterback then gives the ball to a teammate, throws (or “passes”) the ball to a teammate, or runs with the ball himself. The job of the defense

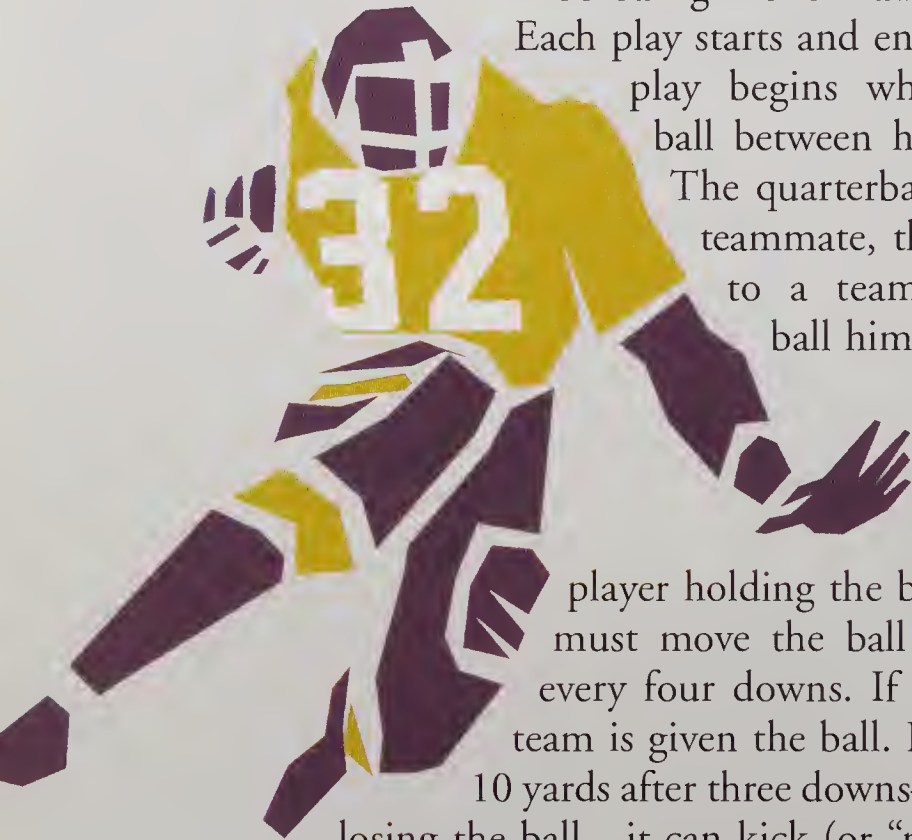
is to tackle the player with the ball or stop the quarterback’s pass. A play ends when the ball (or

player holding the ball) is “down.” The offense must move the ball forward at least 10 yards every four downs. If it fails to do so, the other team is given the ball. If the offense has not made

10 yards after three downs—and does not want to risk losing the ball—it can kick (or “punt”) the ball to make the

other team start from its own end of the field.

At each end of a football field is a goal line, which divides the field from the end zone. A team must run or pass the ball over the goal line to score a touchdown, which counts for six points. After scoring a touchdown, a team can try a short kick for one “extra point,” or try





again to run or pass across the goal line for two points. Teams can score three points from anywhere on the field by kicking the ball between the goal posts. This is called a field goal.

The defense can score two points if it tackles a player while he is in his own end zone. This is called a safety. The defense can also score points by taking the ball away from the offense and crossing the opposite goal line for a touchdown. The team with the most points after 60 minutes is the winner.

Football may seem like a very hard game to understand, but the more you play and watch football, the more “little things” you are likely to notice. The next time you are at a game, look for these plays:



## PLAY LIST

**BLITZ**—A play in which the defense sends extra tacklers after the quarterback. If the quarterback sees a blitz coming, he passes the ball quickly. If he does not, he can end up at the bottom of a very big pile!

**DRAW**—A play in which the offense pretends it will pass the ball, and then gives it to a running back. If the offense can “draw” the defense to the quarterback and his receivers, the running back should have lots of room to run.

**FLY PATTERN**—A play in which a team’s fastest receiver is told to “fly” past the defensive backs for a long pass. Many long touchdowns are scored on this play.

**SQUIB KICK**—A play in which the ball is kicked a short distance on purpose. A squib kick is used when the team kicking off does not want the other team’s fastest player to catch the ball and run with it.

**SWEEP**—A play in which the ball carrier follows a group of teammates moving sideways to “sweep” the defense out of the way. A good sweep gives the runner a chance to gain a lot of yards before he is tackled or forced out of bounds.

# Glossary

## FOOTBALL WORDS TO KNOW

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**ALL-AROUND**—Good at many different parts of the game.

**ALL-STAR**—Describing players who are among the best in the league.

**BACKFIELD**—The players who line up in back of the line of scrimmage. On offense, the quarterback and running backs are in the backfield.

**DRAFT**—The annual meeting during which NFL teams choose from a group of the best college players. The draft is held each spring.

**EXTRA POINT**—A kick worth one point, attempted after a touchdown.

**FIELD GOALS**—Goals from the field, kicked over the crossbar and between the goal posts. A field goal is worth three points.

**FUMBLE**—A ball that is dropped by the player carrying it.

**HEISMAN TROPHY**—The award given each year to the best player in college football.

**INTERCEPTED**—Caught in the air by a defensive player.

**LINEUP**—A list of players or coaches.

**MOST VALUABLE PLAYER (MVP)**—The award given each year to the league's best player; also given to the best player in the Super Bowl and Pro Bowl.

**NATIONAL FOOTBALL CONFERENCE (NFC)**—One of two groups of teams that make up the NFL. The winner of the NFC plays the winner of the American Football Conference (AFC) in the Super Bowl.

**NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE (NFL)**—The league that started in 1920 and is still operating today.

**NFC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME**—The game played to determine which NFC team will go to the Super Bowl.

**NFL CHAMPIONSHIP**—The game played to decide the winner of the league each year from 1933 to 1969.

**NORTH DIVISION**—A division for teams that play in the northern part of the country.

**PLAYOFF GAME**—A game played after the season to determine which teams play for the championship.

**POSTSEASON GAME**—Another term for a playoff game.

**PRO BOWL**—The NFL's all-star game, played after the Super Bowl.

**PROFESSIONAL**—A player or team that plays a sport for money.

**ROOKIES**—Players in their first season.

**ROSTER**—The list of a team's active players.

**STANDINGS**—A list of teams, starting with the team with the best record and ending with the team with the worst record.

**SUPER BOWL**—The championship of football, played between the winners of the NFC and the AFC.

**VETERANS**—Players with great experience.

**WESTERN DIVISION**—A division for teams that play in the western part of the country.

## OTHER WORDS TO KNOW

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**CENTURY**—A period of 100 years.

**COMEBACK**—The process of catching up from behind, or making up a large deficit.

**CONTENDERS**—People who compete for a championship.

**DECADES**—Periods of 10 years; also specific periods, such as the 1950s.

**DYNAMIC**—Exciting and energetic.

**ELUSIVE**—Difficult to catch.

**EXTRAORDINARY**—Unusual, or unusually talented.

**GIGANTIC**—Huge.

**INSTINCT**—A natural understanding.

**LOGO**—A symbol or design that represents a company or team.

**MASCOT**—An animal or person believed to bring a group good luck.

**MEMORABILIA**—Things collected because of their historical value.

**PARALYZED**—Unable to move a section of the body.

**SENSATIONAL**—Amazing.

**TAILBONE**—The bone that protects the base of the spine.

**TRADITION**—A belief or custom that is handed down from generation to generation.

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# Places to Go

## ON THE ROAD

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### DETROIT LIONS

2000 Brush Street  
Detroit, Michigan 48226  
(313) 262-2000

### THE PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

2121 George Halas Drive NW  
Canton, Ohio 44708  
(330) 456-8207

## ON THE WEB

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### THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

- *Learn more about the National Football League*

[www.nfl.com](http://www.nfl.com)

### THE DETROIT LIONS

- *Learn more about the Detroit Lions*

[www.detroitlions.com](http://www.detroitlions.com)

### THE PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

- *Learn more about football's greatest players*

[www.profootballhof.com](http://www.profootballhof.com)

## ON THE BOOKSHELF

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To learn more about the sport of football, look for these books at your library or bookstore:

- Stewart, Mark and Kennedy, Mike. *Touchdown: the Power and Precision of Football's Perfect Play*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Millbrook Press, 2009.
- Buckley Jr., James. *The Child's World Encyclopedia of the NFL*. Mankato, Minnesota: Child's World, 2008.
- Gigliotti, Jim. *Football*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2009.
- Jacobs, Greg. *The Everything Kids' Football Book: the all-time greats, legendary teams, today's superstars—and tips on playing like a pro*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Adams Media, 2008.

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## The Team

MARK STEWART has written more than 50 books on football, and over 200 sports books for kids. He grew up in New York City during the 1960s rooting for the Giants and Jets, and now takes his two daughters, Mariah and Rachel, to watch them play in their home state of New Jersey. Mark comes from a family of writers. His grandfather was Sunday Editor of *The New York Times* and his mother was Articles Editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *McCall's*. Mark has profiled hundreds of athletes over the last 20 years. He has also written several books about New York and New Jersey. Mark is a graduate of Duke University, with a degree in History. He lives with his daughters and wife Sarah overlooking Sandy Hook, New Jersey.



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# Team Spirit<sup>®</sup>

Team spirit is that deep passion shared by the players and fans when they wear the same colors, watch the same scoreboard, and cheer the same triumphs. The **Team Spirit** series celebrates this timeless connection between the players and fans.

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Sports author Mark Stewart brings the spirit and tradition of the Detroit Lions to life for young football fans. Using the team's rich history and memorabilia, he creates an engaging story that transforms readers into instant experts. Content consultant Jason Aikens offers his historical expertise, enhancing a fun story about a great football team.

## Did You Know?

Read *The Detroit Lions* and learn these interesting facts and more about the team:

- *The Lions started as the Spartans in Portsmouth, Ohio.*
- *The Lions had a player who rushed for 2,053 yards in one season.*
- *The Lions shared a stadium with the Tigers baseball team.*
- *The Lions won three NFL Championships in the 1950s.*

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